

LET US THINK

THE SHAPE OF THINGS IN KASHMIR

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The Shape of Things in Kashmir

THROUGHOUT my two-week study tour of the Kashmir Valley in last October when I held talks and discussions with individuals in private or with public workers belonging to different political parties in group meetings, I was trying to ascertain whether India can retain Kashmir permanently. This was my second visit to the State after my externment in the early days of the National Conference rule. I went there for the first time in June 1962 with the purpose of determining the political, economic and social developments about which contradictory and confusing reports had been appearing in the outside Press. On return, I described the situation as I found it in a series of newspaper articles. I also submitted three long reports about my impressions in the form of personal communications to the late Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who read them with interest and expressed a desire that the then Kashmir Premier, Bakshi Gulam Mohammed, should also go through them.¹

Impressions of 1962

The series of articles I wrote appeared in a Calcutta weekly the *Radical Humanist*.² They were subsequently reprinted in a booklet entitled "Kashmir Problem Reconsidered." Summarising my impressions of the tour I observed in the concluding part of the articles :

"So far as the economic and social life of the Kashmiris is concerned I have no doubt they are grateful to India for the little progress they have made ; they hope to be more prosperous in the near future ; but political persecution and suppression of free opinion coupled with harassment by goonda element is, besides making them sullen and resentful, neutralising the good effects of the benevolent attitude of the Union Government. Whenever any talk on economic welfare plans follows political polemics even many sensible Kashmiris would stridently deny that there has been any improvement in the wretched condition of the masses. The wounds inflicted by the repressive policy remind the Kashmiris that their future is unsettled and they begin hopefully to look towards Pakistan."

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1. Having obtained my consent Nehru sent copies of my three communications to Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed who complained to a friend that I was not fair in my observations. I withheld the publication of the correspondence between Nehru and myself in deference to his wishes during his life-time. But now I intend to publish it as his letters throw some light on the working of his mind in regard to Kashmir problem during the closing days of his life.
 2. *Radical Humanist* dated 21st October 1962, 28th October 1962 and 4th November 1962.

I said further :

"To make Kashmir's accession to India everlasting it is essential that the Kashmiris should feel convinced that economically as well as politically they will enjoy freedom by remaining as a part of the great Indian Nation, at any rate to the extent as provided in the constitution for the rest of India."

I indicated how this could be done in the following words :

"It is essential that the start should be made in gradually liberalising the policy by abrogating or amending the laws which have abridged the liberty of the individual or armed the executive with wide powers. Moreover, all malpractices should be totally stopped. What is more, the people should know that the old coercive methods are being replaced by a new enlightened policy which will assume vaster proportions as the people display their capacity for using the liberties properly. But in any case there should be a basic and qualitative change in the approach of the Government in regard to the fundamental rights of the people."

To emphasise the seriousness of the situation I added :

"Much ground has been lost during the last few years by remaining complacent and reposing almost fatalistic trust in the seeming tranquillity in the Valley which I daresay is dangerously deceptive. No doubt risks are involved in making a new approach. But since the policy incessantly pursued till now has failed to achieve the desired objective, wisdom consists in giving a chance to the only other alternative we have. When all is said and done it is delightening to find that the heart of Kashmir is still sound. But the sands are running out and before long when India wakes up as it must some day in the near future if not today, it may be too late. No liberalisation of policy may be able to repair the damage that would have been done to the friendly relations between India and Kashmir till then. If secularism fails in Kashmir it will not only prove ruinous to the cause of democracy in the State, the future of secularism in India will also be imperilled."

These words fell on deaf ears ; it proved to be a voice in the wilderness. In summer 1962 neither the Government of India nor the Kashmir Government entertained any apprehension about the political stability which, they believed, had been achieved in the State ; they did not have the faintest idea of the storm that was brewing. Therefore the country received a rude shock when in December 1963 the Valley was suddenly rocked by an upheaval consequent upon the theft of a sacred relic from Hazratbal shrine. Witnessing the intensity of hostile feelings of agitated Muslim demonstrators against the Government, the special correspondents of leading Indian journals wrote harrowing tales of the continuous repression which the Kashmiris suffered under the National Conference rule for over sixteen years, especially since Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed had assumed power. Almost unanimously it was suggested by impartial observers that the situation could be saved by restoration of civil liberties, eradication of corruption, firm handling of huddlums and liberalisation of administration.

in general. The bewildered Indian public nodded, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed was compelled to resign, his nominee, Shams-uddin, who remained in office for 100 days had to follow suit and G.M. Sadiq, leader of the progressive group in the National Conference, was installed in February 1964 as head of the Kashmir Government to implement a new liberal policy the implications of which were not, however, clearly grasped. It was nevertheless a great change fraught with consequences of grave import.

Marked Difference in 1964

Thus it was in altogether a different political climate that I made my second study tour of the Valley in October 1964. There was a marked difference in what prevailed in summer 1962 and what I saw in autumn 1964. The State people were already gathering the first harvest of the liberal policy barely eight months old. Three changes struck me the most. The Kashmiris no longer talked about public affairs and national problems in hushed voice; they felt no need to assure themselves that spies were not present within hearing distance; every one was sufficiently relaxed and free to express his views on matters of political nature even when the comments were highly critical of the Kashmir administration, the cabinet ministers or the Indian Government.

Secondly, the hooliganism which had demoralised the peaceful sections and self-respecting but weak-hearted individuals was dying down; goondas had lost the enormous influence they wielded in the previous regime and were making frantic efforts to repudiate their disreputable past. In 1962 I had heard a common complaint that owing to the uncontrolled misbehaviour of the riff raff girl students and young women dare not move about in the Srinagar streets after sunset. Now I noticed with a measure of relief, that well dressed ladies were not afraid of walking unescorted late at night. To my anxious enquiries about the safety of the women I usually received the reassuring reply that things had changed for the better under the new administration. During the eight months of Sadiq Government's rule not a single case of molestation of women had been reported. Nor was any political worker or partyless free citizen beaten on the roadside by a hired ruffian because he had the courage to express dislike of the Government for a good or bad reason.

Thirdly, I learned from reliable sources in various quarters that the rampant corruption in the administration which had been purposefully fostered had received a setback. Not that speculation, graft or bribe-taking had stopped, or that public

services had been purged of the dishonest elements by some magician's wand ; but this much was certain that the officials, both big and small, had an awareness that the men at the top thoroughly disapproved such anti-social practices and were determined to extirpate corrupt public servants, if detected.

With the freedom of expression, the State Press had become absolutely independent. While in pre-1964 days it was no easy job to secure permission of the Authority to start a new journal, now one has just to make a declaration before a District Magistrate of the concerned area and the permission is granted as a matter of course without any delay irrespective of the political affiliations or ideological inclinations of the publisher or the editor. The wholesome change was so sudden and complete that at least one old, respectable and experienced journalist, usually a jealous defender of the freedom, astoundingly enough, decried it and advised the Government to impose certain restraints on it.¹

Nearly three score new journals have appeared in the past months most of them with political objectives prohibited before ; only some are ably run and among them are those which intelligently support the conception of secularism as the firm basis of social democracy. It is remarkable that though the majority of the state newspapers directly or indirectly oppose the liberal regime no pressure is exerted to force them to change their policy.

Attitude About Accession Unchanged

Kashmir politics has changed but little in one respect : the attitude of the people towards the accession dispute remains unaltered. Broadly speaking, both the Muslims and the Hindus continue to hold rigid views and do not yield an inch from the posture in which I found them in June 1962. The only change I noticed was that while previously the Muslims tried to hide their views for fear of adverse consequences now they are boldly and freely expressing their pro-Pakistan yearnings with warmth and zest; even some young Government officials did not hesitate to tell me fearlessly that the accession of India to Kashmir was unnatural and had proved harmful by experience. Discussions on the subject are not possible without raising passions : yet no keen observer who tries to objectively investigate the problem can overlook the fact that the change of the Government and introduction of the liberal policy in administration has to a considerable extent blunted the sharp edges of the controversy. Wherever I addressed gatherings in Srinagar

1. See *Chand, Jammu*, dated 21st December, 1964.

or outside the audience heard me with attention and put me questions most of which I thought, were intelligent and relevant. I may add that among those who heard me were mostly people who opposed my stand and held views divergent to mine.

These developments were very heartening indeed ; the policy of liberalisation and relaxation had produced good results and belied the fears of the well meaning politicians and prophets of doom who had warned against its introduction. However, I could not at the same time fail to notice that if the momentum of liberalisation was not maintained there was the danger of revers , of the healthy trend setting in soon. I found that after restoring the civil liberties of the Kashmiris the Sadiq Government was inclined to rest on its oars thinking that the people should remain beholden for what had been already done for them and refusing to carry liberalisation to its logical end. Unfortunately this impression has been confirmed by the recent events and developments ; the leaders in India and Kashmir have relapsed into confused thinking and the lessons of the gigantic upheaval which made liberalisation a necessity and the only alternative policy for straightening the Kashmir imbroglio, has been forgotten so soon and so easily. It is therefore necessary that we should clearly know the causes that gave birth to the Kashmir problem and keeping them constantly in mind find out how it can be dealt with effectively.

Causes of Partition

In the last forties when the Indian struggle for freedom reached a decisive stage the Congress leaders failed to convince the Muslims that they will receive even-handed justice under a national government dominated by the Hindus. The Congress leaders believed that so long as the alien rulers were present and holding power to confer favour, it was not possible to inspire confidence in Muslim countrymen and, with a sense of realism though reluctantly, they agreed to the partition of the country on the basis of religion. The entire sub-continent was thus divided into Hindu majority and Muslim majority areas. But in Kashmir the National Conference, premier political organisation of the State, under leadership of Sheikh Abdullah, opposed joining the new Muslim dominion of Pakistan and urged upon the Congress leaders to accept the accession of the State to India subject to the subsequent ratification of the act by a referendum.

Having agreed to the principle of partition the Indian leaders were hesitant to accept the offer of Kashmir Nationalists, but at the same time various reasons, including the identity of ideals of the Congress and the National Conference as also political kinship of Nehru and Abdullah, prompted

them to take the fateful step ; the instrument of accession was signed by Lord Mountbatten on behalf of the Indian Government, by Sheikh Abdullah for the State people and by Mehr Chand Mahajan, Kashmir Premier, representing the Maharaja Hari Singh, ruler of the State.

The frenzy and fanaticism which preceded and followed the partition were factors hardly conducive to this alliance. It was an act of extra ordinary courage and of faith in the future of Indian democracy. When one hundred million Muslims belonging to the majority Muslim areas had expressly voted to part company and live separately as a new nation it appeared vain to think that barely three million Kashmiris would like to stay behind with India. The polarisation of Hindu and Muslim politics as also the wild communal excitement accentuated by holocausts and bloodshed mocked at the venture. But undaunted the Indian and the Kashmir leaders took the plunge determined to face the odds. Constitutionally and legally, the accession of Kashmir to India was unexceptionable. If Qaide Azam Jinnah could accept Junagarh as a constituent part of Pakistan merely because the Nawab ruler of that Hindu majority State in Gujarat approached him with the offer, India saw no reason why she should feel shy or timid to extend her helping hand to Kashmir. There was no covenant to debar her from doing so. But law, written or unwritten, has little value if the people affected by it oppose it and believe that it has been imposed on them against their will. In the conditions then prevalent in the subcontinent only people blinded by prejudice could believe that the majority of the Kashmir Muslims would voluntarily support the accession deed to which signatures had been affixed by the leaders of India and Kashmir.

The circumstances leading to the partition had proved that the national outlook for which the Congress leaders had been labouring for decades had not fully captured the imagination of the people. Of course the Hindus and Muslims cherished some aspirations and ideals in common. Both wanted to be free from British imperialism and establish a democratic pattern of society in the country. But in certain other respects they profoundly disagreed ; some of their emotions, sentiments and cultural behaviours were peculiar to them. Besides, the Muslims entertained fears and suspicions that after freedom they would not be treated justly by the majority community.

Kashmir Muslims and Partition;

Broadly speaking, the Kashmir Muslims are not very different from the rest of their coreligionists in the subcontinent.

At the time of partition the Kashmiris shared the same emotions which were roused by sad happenings and were equally perturbed by the apprehensions as their brethren outside the State. But they have a historic and cultural background which made the Congress leaders believe that Kashmir would prefer to stay with India than go to Pakistan if with the disappearance of British imperialism, suitable climate could be generated for strengthening the alliance under the changed circumstances. Apart from the secular sentiment which had been inherited from the great King Zain-ul-Abidin popularly known in the Valley as Bud Shah (Great King) and fostered during the centuries of alien rule by both the Muslim saints and Pandit seers, one of the great events of recent history which induced the Congress leaders in this thinking was the conversion in 1939 of Muslim Conference to National Conference and the closer ties which had been forged between the Congress and the National Conference for nearly a decade.

But there were other compelling reasons to resist the temptation. Like the Kashmiris the Pathans too had displayed secular tendencies and owned the Congress ideology for many years while valiantly fighting against the British. In fact, the Congress party had formed governments in the N.W.F.P. in the days of provincial autonomy. But on the eve of independence the Pathans voted for the partition and creation of Pakistan. This was a warning that it was not wholly prudent to depend on the previous opinion of the Kashmiris which might also have undergone a swift change.

When, therefore, the Congress leaders accepted the accession offer of Kashmir they were fully aware of the tremendous difficulties which they were sure to encounter in integrating the State with India; they realized that constitutional and legal accession would be meaningless if it would not be followed by emotional integration of the Kashmiris in the mainstream of Indian social life. It was recognised that Kashmir had an individuality of her own which was in some respects different from the Indian Nation. Though on most of the political, economic and social matters facing the liberated people, the Indians and Kashmiris were in entire agreement, there were a few points mostly cultural, emotional and sentimental where they clashed. It was thought that with the passage of time these differences would disappear and Kashmir would become an integral part of the Indian Republic as any other linguistic and administrative area of the vast country, and the Kashmiris would be happy, contented and prosperous. But till then the Indian leaders no less than the Kashmir leaders had to remain vigilant and devotedly work for the laudable objective exercising the uncommon qualities of statesmanship, patience, forbearance

and farsightedness. It is clear the huge task undertaken was no easy one; particularly it had been rendered almost impossible by the psychosis generated by horrible bloodshed and rabid communal hysteria in both the newly created dominions; extremism was rated high, moderation, balance and common-sense were at a discount; yet the hope of accomplishing the noble task lay in reconciling the two nationalisms of India and Kashmir by pruning both of their irrational fringes and overgrowth with the ultimate aim of fostering a common humanist outlook among the Indians and the Kashmiris. If this could be done what a splendid achievement it would be !

Joint Historic Adventure

In this historic adventure the Indian leaders while guiding their national affairs according to the wishes of the Indians were expected not to ignore the sentiments and feelings of the Kashmiris, and, in their turn, the Kashmir leaders also were expected to see that in the conduct of State politics nothing was done to embarrass the Indian colleagues. It was an arduous task indeed which only supermen could undertake in the conditions prevalent in post-partition period; but if the integration of Kashmir with India was the desideratum the leaders had to become supermen.

It is fair to recognise that the Indian leaders made a good start; they were extraordinarily generous in handling the Kashmir State affairs: The leaders of the National Conference were afforded fullest opportunity to shape the destiny of their homeland according to their own lights. And this liberal policy was soon given a constitutional shape.

Within a surprisingly short period of two years after the achievement of independence, the Indian Constituent Assembly produced a bulky constitution enshrining the lofty ideals which had guided the country for decades while struggling for liberation from British imperialism. It was a document of which any democrat could feel proud. The constitutional structure of Indian society was raised on the firm foundation of secular principles and there was no trace of religion in it; caste system was completely ended; the rights of man were guaranteed and India set on the path of democratic freedom.

The adoption of the constitution gladdened the hearts of the Kashmiris like any other democrats in India and abroad. But what heartened the former most was the special provision which had been made regarding their State in it. Like the leaders of the National Congress, the framers of the Constitution fully grasped the reasons that made the relationship between Ind a

and Kashmir tenuous and what they could do to make it strong and perennial. Despite the adoption of the full-fledged democratic constitution by the Indian nation, they realized that Kashmir had yet to feel one with India ; emotional temperaments had to be adjusted and differences eliminated with passage of time.

The Constitution makers deprecated all attempts made in certain quarters to directly or indirectly foist the decisions of the Indians on the Kashmiris. They knew that in the circumstances then prevailing the Kashmiris would unfavourably react to the imposition of a constitution that was primarily the handiwork of the Indians because there was no accord on details at that stage. It would therefore be enough for the time being if Kashmiris willingly decided to accept the fundamentals of the Constitution and keep their State within its framework. The Constitution makers envisaged a transition period during which the Kashmiris would have the opportunity to experience the sort of life that they would have to live as citizens of the Indian Union ; only thereafter would they be able to make a voluntary declaration to get absorbed in the mainstream of India's national life.

The Article 370

Very wisely, therefore, Article 370 was inserted in the Constitution as a temporary provision by the Constituent Assembly fully confident that the association with free democratic India would surely convince the Kashmiris of their bright future by becoming an integral part of the Union. According to this provision the whole of Article 238 applicable to all other States did not apply to Jammu and Kashmir. The Article 370 further limited the powers of the Parliament to make laws about matters detailed in the Union List and the Concurrent List. Thus Kashmir State remained within the frame-work of the Indian Constitution but became virtually autonomous as the centre was entitled to handle only three subjects on its behalf, namely External Affairs, Defence and Transport.

It may be noted here that even when the Constitution was being framed and completed voices were raised in the country by Hindu communalists and reactionaries against the special treatment of Kashmir, but better counsels prevailed with the Indian leaders and the, now controversial, Article 370 was passed almost unanimously by the Constituent Assembly. It was an earnest of Indian statesmanship.

However, the Constitution makers envisaged the day not in too distant future but quite early, when the need of the tem-

porary provision would end and the Article 370 would be abrogated. But this step was to be taken not at the behests of any extraneous authority, not even at the demand of the Indian Public opinion however strong or united on the subject, but at the express wish of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore the concluding part of the Article 370 laid down in clearest possible terms that the President may by public notification declare that this Article shall cease to be operative or will be operative with such exception as specified but the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the Kashmir State to this effect shall be necessary before the President issues such a notification. After the dissolution of the State Constituent Assembly the right to recommend could naturally be exercised either directly by the Kashmiris or by their genuine representatives chosen in a free election.

This was, so to say, the outline of the blue print of a joint adventure for the establishment of a democratic society in India with Kashmir as its integral part drawn by the secular minded leaders of the ancient country just liberated from imperialist domination. It is obvious that the success of the plan depended on the good work that the two parties could do in their respective spheres of influence. If either failed, the endeavour was bound to end in smoke. It would be best for each to be cognizant of their own problems and also to constantly keep in mind the difficulties of the other. The Indian leaders had to prove not only by their words but through their deeds that the Muslims could live like free, respectable and equal citizens of India as envisaged in the Constitution, convinced that their fears at the time of partition were unfounded and imaginary. The Kashmir leaders had to satisfy the State people that through secularism alone they could reach the goal of social democracy for which they had indomitably fought for years and that by remaining with India they could achieve more political and cultural freedom as well as economic prosperity than by acceding to Pakistan. Since the State had become practically autonomous the National Conference leaders as the new rulers had the opportunity to create conditions for the fulfilment of such a purpose.

Kashmir Makes Progress

The Kashmir leaders put their best foot forward. Undeterred by the atmosphere surcharged with communal passion and religious frenzy born of the partition, they asseverated that Kashmir was wedded to secular ideology and would not flinch from it; the State people will protect their liberty with life blood and build a society of their dreams. It was decided that though forming part of India, the State would have its

own constitution to meet the peculiar needs of the people, its own flag to symbolise Kashmir's individuality and a separate head of the State. Unlike the head of governments of other units in the Indian republic the head of the Kashmir Government would be called Prime Minister and not Chief Minister of the State. The Dogra Maharaja was virtually banished and after some time the hereditary rulership was terminated; an elected head of the State called Sadar-i-Riyasat was to take his place. In this way the sentiments of the population were respected and their fears of being absorbed in the vast Hindu majority of India allayed; their identity was preserved; their individuality left unimpaired.

In the economic field too the Kashmir leaders acted with promptitude, courage and revolutionary zeal: Jagirs and big landed estates were abolished; ceiling was put on the possession of agricultural land; no one was allowed to have more than six acres of cultivable soil. The land thus rescued from absentee landlords was distributed among landless tenants. In the Valley, it is notable, landlords were mostly Hindu and the tenants exclusively Muslim. Old debts amounting to millions of rupees were liquidated to improve the condition of indigent, poverty-stricken, indebted masses. Positively, the Government organised and subsidized the cottage industries and helped entrepreneurs to start new small scale manufacturing units. Many roads were constructed connecting towns and villages and cities. A transport system was established carrying every day thousands of passengers from one corner of the State to the other; it is cheap, efficient and regular. Many towns and villages were electrified.

And literacy was quickly spread in all parts of the State by opening schools at short distances from each other.

Such rapid progress in economic and social fields would have been inconceivable in pre-1947 days under the monarchical rule of the Dogras; it was surely conducive to the fructification of the plan for integration of the State with India.

The Policy of Repression.

But unfortunately the National Conference leaders were intolerant of the opposition. It was in no way surprising or unexpected that as a result of the harrowing events which followed partition, secularism was at a discount, particularly with a large section of the State Muslims who opposed the new regime. The situation demanded the best qualities of head and heart: powers of persuasion, sweet reasonableness, sense of history and calm attitude. But puffed up with absolute power, revengeful against opponents and impatient to

produce results at the earliest by conversion of public opinion in favour of secularism, the new rulers soon resorted to repressive methods and violated every canon of democratic philosophy.

The first Prime Minister of the National Conference Government was Sheikh Abdullah, the veteran leader of the freedom struggle, who assumed power immediately after the instrument of accession with India was signed and ratified. During his seven years rule thousands of political workers were consigned to prison for long periods without trial merely because they held views unpalatable to the Government. Among the prisoners were those who believed in secularism but were critical of the working of the administration. Sheikh Abdullah invited brigades of the Indian Army which were deployed all over the State and its borders to defend it against invasion from Pakistan but these forces also assisted the National Conference government to maintain power if and when threatened by popular uprising.

An ordinance entitled "Enemy Agents Ordinance" was promulgated to arrest and summarily try those who were suspected of pro-Pakistan leanings with harsh punishment of rigorous imprisonment for the guilty. The Preventive Detention Act and Defence of India Rules vehemently denounced as lawless laws by the National Conference leaders in the days of the Maharaja, were pressed into service and freely used to imprison the non-conformists.

Concerned that the incarceration of a large number of people will bring the regime into disrepute outside the State, a more reprehensible method of dealing with the opponents was ingeniously devised. A band of ragtag and bobtail was organised to humiliate and demoralise the critics. The police force was doubled and a persecution wing known as Special Police Establishment created under a notorious bully to maltreat and torture suspects and release them only when their spirit had been sufficiently broken disabling them to oppose the regime. It seems unbelievable today when Sheikh Abdullah has become the champion of the State People's right of self-determination and a staunch supporter of Indo-Pak friendship that unheard of barbarities should have been perpetrated by him or with his knowledge and approval. But it is manifest that such methods of running the administration and governing the country were hardly helpful in converting the State Muslims to secularism or in securing their free will for integration of the State with India; it only embittered the Kashmiris and deepened the hostility which already existed in their minds as an outcome of the virulent Muslim League propaganda in

pre-1947 days and the highly provocative broadcasts of Radio Pakistan after its establishment.

If the National Conference leaders had thought that the repressive measures would be abandoned after a short period and the State restored to normalcy as a result of liberal political and economic reforms, they were soon disillusioned. Suppression made people resentful and the more they opposed the more drastic were the measures the Government applied to put them down. A vicious circle started which seemed nowhere to break.

Because the objective of integrating Kashmir with India by the voluntary assent of the people was a joint venture involving the interests of both, the Indian leaders should have pulled up the Kashmir Government and reminded the National Conference leaders that by alienating the goodwill of the Kashmiris they were jeopardising the chance of success. But partly owing to the autonomy granted to the State in the Indian Constitution, but mainly due to the antipathy for the victims caused by the reports of the Kashmir leaders that the suppressed people were one and all pro-Pakistan conspirators, the Indian Government connived at the misdeeds. This was a grave error of judgment which proved pernicious in the long run. Had the Indian leaders displayed the required courage and political sagacity to firmly stand by Kashmir democracy and upheld the civil liberties and human rights of the Kashmiris during those early days of Indo-Kashmir alliance, the accession problem would not have assumed the threatening proportions it does and the issue might have found a solution long before to the entire satisfaction of democratic India.

That, despite the termination of Dogra rule, the implementation of revolutionary economic reforms and the growing standard of life, the National Conference leaders became unpopular there could be no doubt ; it could be read in the angry looks of the people and smelt in the air by any keen observer.

Hindu Communalism in India.

In India too secularism did not have a smooth sailing. It is one thing, though praiseworthy in itself, to produce a splendid democratic constitution enshrining human values and high ideals, but it is different to practise the noble professions in conducting public affairs and directing everyday life. In spite of the herculean efforts of the top Congress leaders Hindu revivalism became increasingly violent in temper and threatening in behaviour. It received sufficient nourishment from the poisonous anti-Hindu propaganda incessantly carried on across

the border from Pakistan. Soon the Hindu narrow-mindedness began to invade the Congress citadel. The Muslims in India found themselves in a wretched position ; they were suspected of harbouring disloyal tendencies ; they were denied fair share in civil services and in recruitment to armed forces notwithstanding the declared equality of all communities in the Constitution. Even in Kashmir the ratio of Muslim entrants in Central Government departments was far from their ratio in State population. This gave a big jolt to the thinking of the Kashmir Muslims and augmented their communal propensities.

Defection of Sheikh Abdullah.

In 1952, an astounding event took place in Kashmir politics. Encouraged by the rejuvenation of Hindu communalism in India the Dogras of Jammu soon after independence founded Praja Parishad to advocate the lost cause of Hindu supremacy. It was destined to come into conflict with the Government seeking social justice for the Muslims. Every reform was a thorn in the side of the Dogras who fiercely opposed it ; the Dogras launched anti-Government movements, the agitators were arrested and imprisoned first in 1949 and for a second time in 1952. There was an uproar in the Indian Press over it and the Indian Government could not help feeling concerned. One Central Minister, Gopalaswamy Ayyengar, a former Premier of Kashmir, was hurriedly despatched to Jammu to put pressure on the Kashmir Government to release the Dogra leaders. At the time, hundreds of Kashmir Muslims were also behind the bars ; but neither the Indian Press raised any voice demanding their liberty nor did the Indian Government think it fit to advise the Kashmir Government to release them. This difference in the treatment of Dogra Hindus and Kashmir Muslims could not strengthen the roots of secularism in the State.

Enjoyment of absolute power had not yet made Sheikh Abdullah totally insensible to the public opinion, at any rate so far as his personality was involved. He realized that he had become an unwanted figure because he had trodden over the aspirations and emotions of the people he had promised to serve. Rather thoughtlessly and indifferent to consequences, he made an unexpected somersault and played foul with India. He started giving expression to the ideas which were in crass contradiction to the views he had held for over sixteen years. Overlooking his own faults of omission and commission, he unsparingly denounced Indian leadership and Congress Nationalism. He virtually and unilaterally tore to pieces the agreement that had been entered into by the Indian and the

Kashmir leaders for promoting secular nationalism. India felt aghast, the Congress leaders were flabbergasted and for the Indian Government it was a trying time indeed.

Sheikh Abdullah's forthright but imprudent utterances led to his deposition, arrest and imprisonment in August 1953 at the hands of his erstwhile confident and lieutenant Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed who became the second National Conference Prime Minister.

The defection of Sheikh Abdullah and his group should have occasioned heartsearching and a reassessment of the Kashmir policy in the light of the principles which had guided the Constitution makers. This was not done at all ; the minds did not travel that way. A flattering unction was laid to the ailing soul that Sheikh Abdullah was solely responsible for the mess and a strong hand was needed to deal firmly with unfriendly sections in the Valley. The Indian Government failed to diagnose the disease and therefore the muddle-headed policy continued to operate.

Bakshi Intensifies Repression.

With the downfall of Sheikh Abdullah the chapter devoted to convert Kashmiris to the secular ideal through reasoning and persuasion came to an end. By now Hindu revivalists and reactionaries had been able to exert sufficient baneful influence on the policies of the Indian Government. It was now believed that Kashmir Muslims were essentially communal in outlook and only firm determination to hold the State at any cost will make them forget the possibility of any chance of accession to Pakistan. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed assured India that by providing large sums to be spent for the welfare of the Kashmiris the Indian Government would be able to achieve the new aim.

There is no gainsaying the fact that India helped the Kashmir Government with more liberal grants in the second phase and a further progress was registered in educational and economic spheres. But the satisfactory results were offset by the savage repression let loose during the period. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed added some more laws to the armoury of coercion ; any citizen could be detained for five years at a stretch and the Government was under no obligation to inform the detenu about the grounds of detention ; the poor detenu could be rearrested after release and detained for another term of five years. Bakshi, besides having a large number of goondas in his pay, recruited a force euphemistically called the Peace Brigade which was frequently employed to harass the

opponents and silence them. He imposed heavy restrictions on the State Press and peremptorily banned publication of newspapers which were critical of his misconceived policy. He seldom permitted a new journal to come out. During his days public meetings could never be held in the Valley for political purposes unless they were meant to support the views and the activities of the ruling group.

Side by side with the practice of strong arm methods Bakshi launched upon a campaign of corruption. By giving tempting bribes in the shape of huge sums, government jobs or contracts he corrupted political workers, journalists, religious leaders and others inside and outside the State. His route permit system has since gained notoriety.

Sheikh Abdullah was jealous of Kashmir's autonomy and resisted its infringement in any way but Bakshi, to curry favour with the Indian public opinion, made inroads into it. Through Presidential notifications several central departments like Audit, Customs, Finance, Supreme Court and Election Commission extended their jurisdiction to Jammu and Kashmir which could not be done without the express desire of the Kashmiris.

In almost every public utterance Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed in season and out of season declared that Kashmir had finally and irrevocably decided to remain with India ; the only problem facing the State was to liberate that part of the country which was in the occupation of Pakistan. He would dogmatically add that every Kashmiri supported him in these assertions.

Under Bakshi's regime general elections to the State legislature were held twice in 1957 and 1962. As has been universally recognised now even in India, on both occasions the elections were rigged and by hook or by crook Bakshi got his chosen men declared elected to the legislature. Only a few seats were allowed to be captured in 1962 by the Praja Parishad in Jammu so that Indian public opinion is not antagonised.

Deceptive Normalcy.

Seven years of steam rolling had at last brought about a stabilisation in Kashmir and Bakshi was accepted as a successful administrator and a hero. The chaotic conditions of Pakistan politics which culminated in the establishment of military dictatorship in that country were helpful to Bakshi in bringing about the "normalcy". He was admired and his methods recommended for emulation to inexperienced and less gifted politicians holding office ; he was lionised wherever he

travelled in India. The Indian leaders believed or pretended to believe that the Kashmir problem had ended and any one who had the courage to suggest that the seeming calm was dangerously deceptive was considered an incorrigible sceptic, if not worse. A structure had been laboriously raised which appeared strong, massive and well built. Kashmir had become safe, impregnable and inseparable part of India. At any rate, so thought the Indian politicians and Kashmir leaders.

Then in the beginning of 1963 cracks began to appear and at the end of the year a chasm yawned which swallowed Bakshi. He was blown off with his own petard. The house of cards built by him with fabulous wealth of India and the tears of Kashmiris came down. Implementing the Kamraj plan to clean public life in the country, Nehru advised Bakshi to step down from premiership and devote his time to reorganising and popularising the National Conference among the Kashmiris. This small but significant indication of the Indian Prime Minister's disapproval of Bakshi's repressive policy and corrupt practices was instrumental in releasing the pent-up feelings of hostility which had been accumulating and simmering in the minds of the Kashmiris. Huge public demonstrations all through summer which led to the uprising in December left nobody in doubt that Bakshi for all his bluff and bluster was a disliked figure in State politics.

In the contemporary history of Kashmir the people have on two occasions, in July 1931 and December 1963, shown that exasperated by the misdeeds of the rulers they can assert their will and make it difficult if not impossible for the Government to function. In winter 1962-64 despite inclement weather the Kashmiris proved that the bestiality of Bakshi's hordes had not succeeded in killing their spirit. Such massive and unprecedented were the demonstrations that New Delhi was compelled to take notice and adopt measures to mollify the agitated people.

Dim Realization of Real Problem.

Dimly it began to be realized at this juncture that there was something basically wrong with the Kashmir policy pursued by the Central Government. For the first time in sixteen years the Indian Press published more or less accurate and revealing accounts of the high handedness and shameful methods with which the Kashmiris had been ruled by the National Conference Government. Some light was thrown on the rampant corruption fostered by Bakshi and his brothers and the seething unrest which had brought about the uprising. Whether the Indian leaders realized that the Kashmir problem was the product of

the violation of the spirit which guided the Constitution makers and that they had for past years followed wrong methods in bringing about the integration of the State with India, is doubtful. Probably they never thought on those lines. But it is clear that profiting by long and bitter experience and re-enthused by the idealism which inspired patriots in the early period of Kashmir's freedom struggle, a batch of National Conference workers under leadership of G. M. Sadiq, felt convinced that for promotion of secularism and democracy and with the object of emotionally integrating Kashmir with India it was imperative that there should be complete reorientation of State policies ; civil liberties and human rights of the people had to be restored ; detenus and political prisoners had to be released ; complete freedom of expression granted and the Muslims particularly had to be convinced by deeds and not merely by words that their religious, political and economic rights would be safe if they continued to remain with India.

Though no doubt in consonance with the liberal spirit of the Constitution makers, it was a daring enterprise on which Sadiq and his colleagues decided to embark. There was wide scepticism in the country about the efficacy of this belated move to untie the tangled skien of the vexing imbroglio. But the disturbing events of the 1963-64 winter left no choice for the Indian Government but to give the alternative a trial. Being the antithesis of his political philosophy and practice, Bakshi offered stout opposition to the liberalisation but the furious wind blowing in the country forced him to yield. Sometime later he plotted to overthrow the Government but was promptly arrested and imprisoned on grave charges of corruption.

Brave Statesmanship

Coming to power Sadiq took one bold step after another. He astounded the people everywhere by showing that tolerance and patience paid and that the policy of liberalisation and democratisation alone was conducive to restoration of peace and tranquillity in the State. He emptied the jails of all the detenus and political prisoners. Even Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues charged by Bakshi with conspiracy to overthrow the State and join Kashmir with Pakistan by force, were released. The infamous Peace Brigade was disbanded. Freedom of expression and association as well as freedom of Press heavily curtailed for 17 years were restored. There were no doubt some trying times for the State administration and weeks of anxiety for the Indian Government, but ultimately Sadiq's proved to be the right and wise statesmanship. For people became relaxed and less hostile to the administration ; the

tension in the atmosphere disappeared to a considerable extent ; a bit of real normalcy returned.

Progressive Forces Set to Work

The liberalisation policy set new forces working in the State. On the one hand it encouraged the moribund secularism and democracy to revive and organise ; on the other it weakened the communal minded sections because the main plank of their anti-government agitation—suppression of the people—had been removed. In the new climate extremism gradually began to lose appeal and process of conversion of Muslims through persuasion and reasoning was put into gear ; elements in public life of the Muslims outside the National Conference which preferred secularism and social democracy to rule in the name of Islam, came into their own.

The Relic Restoration Movement had all but destroyed the National Conference. As a result of the anti-people measures of the Government for sixteen long years this organization had lost following and existed only in name. The upheaval reduced it to shambles ; it was thoroughly discredited and its leaders were a hated lot. Sadiq Government's policy gave National Conference a new lease of life. With the fall of Bakshi, undesirable groups and goondas hastened to quit it or were made to go while going was good ; there was purging on a wide scale ; new hopes were raised in the organisation though on the whole the general public still remained aloof for several months.

Sadiq's most trusted colleague, Mir Qasim, resigned from the cabinet at the advice of his chief to reorganise the National Conference. As its General Secretary he extensively toured the Valley in the last fall to tell the Kashmiris about the new orientation of State politics. Sadiq too went about with the same purpose. Both were welcomed by gatherings and though the opponents tried to create disturbances, the tours were moderately successful. Thus liberalisation seemed to have worked a wonder and Kashmir was for the first time preparing itself for the achievement of emotional integration with India in the only possible way, the rational way, which had been originally thought out jointly by the Indian and the Kashmir leaders and which the Constitution makers had adumbrated in Article 370. But then came the anti-climax.

The Anti-climax

The enemies of liberalism among the Muslims and the Hindus did not stay put while the Sadiq Government was

winning one post after another in their onward march towards social democracy. Neither the Muslim communalists nor the Hindu reactionaries let the grass grow under their feet while the ruling party was consolidating its stand and reinvigorating their political organisation. Taking advantage of the liberal policy the anti-India and pro-Pakistan sections came into the open and started new platforms to propagate their ideologies and popularise their views. In the beginning especially immediately after the release of Sheikh Abdullah and other political leaders in April 1964, the whole country seemed to be flocking to hear them. But gradually their exhortations lost the force and they were cut down to their proper size. It would have been unrealistic to believe that their influence would become negligible or that they did not pose a problem. However, it was wisely decided by Sadiq and his colleagues that the adversary's challenge was to be met on a political plane by counter-propaganda through spread of healthy ideas, modern concepts of freedom and rational beliefs.

Judging from the results shown during eight months of liberalisation it was no over-optimism to think that Sadiq Government might have been successful, given time and patience. But the Hindu reactionaries would give it neither. There are in Kashmir and outside powerful classes and sections among the Hindus who believe that Muslims can never be loyal to India. There is no logic in this belief and the claim on Kashmir State which is overwhelmingly Muslim. Nor do these myopic people realize that by holding such views they are rendering the integration of the Kashmiris and Indians impossible of achievement. Be that as it may, the anti-Muslim nationalists have not only well organised parties to propagate their ideology but they are also found in strength within the Congress fold; they have also vociferous members in the Indian Parliament. Unabashed, they incessantly stress that Kashmir can be held by force and should be held by force in utter disregard of the consequences in the national and international sphere. As mentioned earlier, they opposed tooth and nail grant of autonomy to Kashmir in the Indian Constitution. Unsuccessful in this endeavour they have been anxious all along during the past years to smother the spirit with which the Constitution makers inserted the provision while subsequently the Kashmir issue was being handled by the Indian Government from time to time. If the Government openly or tacitly approved the repressive policy in Kashmir the Hindu communalists had much say in it. And when the repression produced the restlessness in the State they only justified their anti-Muslim outlook and blamed the Indian Government for not administering a stronger dose of their nostrum.

The restoration of civil liberties in the Valley and the free expression of views by the Muslims was extremely disliked by the Hindu reactionaries and ultra Nationalists. Because some Kashmir leaders gave vent to feelings bitterly critical of India, the Sadiq Government was declared incompetent and unable to deal with the situation; the demand for the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution was revived and the Indian Government was advised to dismiss the liberal Government and impose President's rule on the State. Repeatedly Sadiq was asked to curb and gag those who did not agree with the present constitutional position of Kashmir or raised any objection to the State's accession to India. Rightly did Sadiq refuse to take any such action though he did warn his adversaries that no disturbance of peace will be tolerated. His approach to the problem was sensible and guided by the universally accepted democratic principles. He would fight ideas by ideas and do his best to defeat the opponents of his policy on political plane ; employment of force, he believed, would defeat its own purpose and so long as he remained in office he would follow this course and none else, the opposition of Hindu communalists notwithstanding.

Sadiq Faces Imponderables

This was indeed heroic and said with a keen appreciation of the historic task ahead. But Sadiq Government had to deal with imponderables. Ignorance, misunderstanding and lack of sympathy on the part of those who are the vehement supporters of his objective to bring about emotional integration of Kashmir with India, are Sadiq's most inveterate foes ever ready to undo his work. The implications of the liberal policy sponsored by Sadiq Government were not understood even by the rank and file members of the Kashmir ruling party who wished sincerely to follow their leader. The recurrent discomfiture of the National Conference in State politics since it was formed in 1939 has been caused by this lack of understanding, broad mindedness and long perspective. The members of the Conference have consistently viewed national problems from their respective religious angles and never from secular, democratic standpoint.

Sadiq and his colleagues courageously held the fort of liberalisation and declared that if they had to abandon it they would prefer to relinquish office. But to be successful this stand needs support of a substantial section of the people ; this was not forthcoming. Though in the country enough of goodwill had been gained in all classes, the party men did not rise in stature because the cadres were ill-informed and

inadequately equipped with ideas. The Pakistan propaganda and the general attitude of their coreligionists has confused and confounded the Muslim members of the National Conference ; they talk parrot-like about the accession advancing hackneyed arguments which the Indian Press and the Hindu leaders have been usually trotting out all these years and which carry little weight. There is no strength of conviction in the assertions of the workers and therefore Muslim masses turn a deaf ear to it. In utter disregard of the Muslim reactions the Hindu members of the National Conference hustle the leaders to take steps which would annihilate the individuality of Kashmir and wound the susceptibilities of the Kashmiris ; the Hindu colleagues of Sadiq are thus playing in the hands of the Hindu reactionaries.

Proposal to End National Conference

Even during the closing days of Bakshi's rule the Dogra Hindu members of the National Conference had mildly demanded that since the ideals of the Congress and the Conference were identical there was no need to maintain a separate organisation in the State. But it was feared that any proposal to dissolve the National Conference might injure the feelings of the Kashmiris who had reared it with their blood and sacrifice. It was also argued that so long as the State people had certain peculiar cultural and political problems to encounter it may not be advisable to merge the National Conference with the Congress. The demand was not entertained or encouraged. But now the Dogras insisted on it. The Muslim members of the National Conference should have set their face against the move and represented the feelings of the Muslims which were manifestly against it. But confused as ever they meekly connived ; and the top leaders of the National Conference for reasons best known to them accepted the unreasonable Dogra demand. This proved to be a disastrous step for liberalisation policy. For the Hindu reactionaries in Kashmir and outside emboldened by the obvious weakness of the liberal leaders started their fresh onslaughts and challengingly demanded the abrogation of the Article 370.

Now the campaign against the liberalisation policy was intensified and carried into the camp of the Congress outside the State. It has been the old practice and tradition of the Congress to half-heartedly oppose the Hindu communal demand in the beginning when it is made for the first time, but concede it when the passions are roused. Fiercely opposed to Muslim Communalism, on Hindu communal matters a Congressman has never had a mind of his own.

What Mahasabha or Jan Sangh demands today the Congressmen do so tomorrow. That is what happened about Kashmir. For 17 years the Congress leaders and the Government of India had been consistently opposing the demand for abrogation of Kashmir's autonomy as guaranteed in the Indian Constitution to maintain the spirit of the pact between the Indians and the Kashmiris. It is true small inroads had been made every now and then into it but on the whole the basic autonomy had been allowed to remain unimpaired. The fresh attack of the reactionaries and the communalists was so concerted and ferocious that the Government of India consulted wisdom in appeasement.

An Unfortunate Decision.

On November 20, the Lok Sabha discussed a Bill introduced by Prakash Vir Shastri, an independent member, urging that Article 370 of the Constitution be done away with in the interest of complete integration of the State with the rest of the country. The support of the House was full and enthusiastic. There was no opposition to the demand and every member who spoke on the occasion supported it. The Congress members vied with the Jan Sanghis to prove that they did not lag behind in destroying the individuality of the Kashmiris. The only member to qualify his backing was R. K. Khadlikar who in the spirit of Constitution-makers pointed out that the initiative should come from the Kashmir people and not from the Union Government. This evoked bitter references ; nobody was prepared to hear the sane advice for the spirit of the Constitution-makers was nearly dead. However, the voting on the Bill had to be postponed till the next day of the non-official business.

Meanwhile, the campaign against Kashmir's autonomy was stepped up by the opponents. Struck with crippling fear and wanting in moral courage the leaders of the Indian Government started clearing the decks for the virtual acceptance of the demand.

But legally even a change in the Article 370 could not be effected without the recommendation of the Kashmir Constituent Assembly. Since that body had been dissolved long ago the right reverted to the Kashmiris who had elected it. Taking Sadiq Government to be the representative of the State people pressure was brought to bear on it to agree to the changes which would satisfy the Indian public opinion. An unpleasant position was created for the Kashmir liberals. They were not oblivious of the current feelings of Kashmir Muslims regarding the merger of the State in India and the discussion in the Lok

Sabha had left no uncertainty about the Indian demand. Sadiq saw that Indian Nationalism was bent upon having its way ; it was perhaps expedient to give in but the cost was very heavy ; liberalism would receive a severe blow. But in moments of weakness Sadiq yielded and, I think, he was unfair to himself.

Could Sadiq Government on its own recommend the repeal of Article 370 ? It is well known that Kashmir Legislature was packed with hand-picked men of Bakshi who were surely not entitled to represent the State people. No free election had been held and won by the liberal group to prove their title to speak on behalf of the Kashmiris. Could the Government of India do so by itself ? The Constitution had nowhere given that right to the Union Government not even to the Indian Parliament. It had been specifically laid down that only the accredited leaders of the State people could abrogate the special provision granting autonomy. After a careful review, including a discussion by the Cabinet, the Union Government decided that it would be imprudent to repeal the Article which gives a special status to the State of Jammu and Kashmir. But the reactionary protagonists of the abrogation proposal had to be appeased. With mutual consultation between the Union Government and the State Government it was decided that this aim could be achieved by extending to Kashmir State in successive stages all those articles of the Constitution which did not apply to the State ; the Article 370 would be eroded, declared Sadiq.

Application of Articles 356 & 357 to Kashmir.

As a first step in this direction on December 4 the Union Home Minister G. L. Nanda, announced the Government's decision to apply to Kashmir Articles 356 and 357 of the Constitution which set out the mechanism and to give Parliament the power to make laws for the State during a breakdown of the constitutional machinery. Central jurisdiction was also extended to the State in regard to four more items. These included organisation of the High Court, regulation of the affairs of trading corporations and price controls. In addition, provisions relating to direct elections of the members of Parliament from the State instead of nomination by the State Government were also made. With the bagful of legal proposals the Hindu communalism was appeased, at any rate for the time being.

Being in the last analysis responsible for the maintenance of peace as well as law and order in Kashmir, perhaps the Union Government could not ignore the contingency that might arise by the breakdown of the constitutional machinery

at any time and the need for the President to temporarily administer the State. But the time at and the manner in which the step of applying the Articles was taken created some unfortunate impressions : first, that Hindu communalism was quite powerful in India and could have its way, and second, that liberal Kashmir Government was weak and unstable in the eyes of the central leaders and unable to deliver the goods.

Beginning of the End of Autonomy

While making the important pronouncement the Home Minister assured the Parliament members that the Government shared their concern and sense of urgency for fuller integration of Kashmir. His argument was that Article 370 was not a wall. "It was a tunnel. A good deal of traffic had already passed, more will pass now." A few days later the Union Education Minister, M. C. Chagla, made the intention more clear. Speaking at Jammu he observed that through Article 370 the whole of the Indian Constitution could be applied to Jammu and Kashmir. In his opinion, Chagla said, the separate Constitution of Kashmir should be scrapped and the Indian Constitution applied in its entirety to the State.

Encouraged by these words the Hindu reactionaries refused to be appeased by the measures adopted and insisted on the repeal of the controversial Article. The Jammu Jan Sangh (old Praja Parishad) declared that the Dogras will launch an agitation to achieve this aim. On December 27 the All-India Hindu Mahasabha put forward a demand for promulgation of the President's rule in the Jammu and Kashmir State in view of the evil designs of China and Pakistan. On January 20 Akhil Bhartiya Jan Sangh too joined the chorus.

Some of the measures proposed to be applied to Jammu and Kashmir by the Home Minister should have been welcome to the Kashmiris because they were manifestly democratic ; such for instance was the one meant to get the members from Kashmir for Parliament elected and not nominated by State Government as heretofore. But the manner in which the steps were taken and the context in which the Articles were applied to the State added to the fears and suspicions of the State Muslims regarding their future as citizens of India. It is amazing that neither the Government of India nor the State Government took the reaction of the State people into consideration. Their sole desire was to appease the Indian public opinion. This is all the more to be regretted because it cut short the process of rethinking on the part of State Muslims which had undoubtedly started with the liberalisation of the administration.

Fears and Suspicions

In my extensive discussions with the Muslims all over the Valley whether separately or in groups I found they entertained innumerable fears and suspicions about their future if they continued to remain with India. Many of these are no doubt imaginary born of the tirades incessantly carried on by Pakistan and Azad Kashmir Radios against India. But some of the apprehensions are not entirely groundless and have to be removed by the leaders if the aim is the emotional integration of the State with India. It should not be forgotten that the image of India projected into the minds of the Kashmiris through the rulers' misdeeds during the past seventeen years is ugly and hideous. That in itself is sufficient to scare away the Kashmiris. The communal riots in many towns of India particularly at Jabalpur, Rourkela, Jamshedpur and Calcutta in which Muslims were killed, looted or made homeless have only increased the fears. The difficulties that the Muslims are experiencing in getting jobs in central civil services or in recruitment in armed forces have further strengthened them. Inadequate representation of Kashmir Muslims in Central Government departments is not an unreal grievance. Declaration of Hindi as National language of India is equally irksome if not more to the Kashmir Muslims as it is to Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. What mentally upsets the Kashmiris is the provocative and irresponsible speeches frequently indulged in by leaders of Jan Sangh and Hindu Mahasabha which are occasionally supported by some Congress leaders indirectly suggesting policies to dispirit the patriotic Muslims or hold them down by force.

Not very long ago Kashmir was ruled by non-Kashmiris ; the entire administrative machinery was manned by outsiders. In the twenties under pressure of public opinion the Maharaja was compelled to enact a law debarring outsiders from being employed on government jobs or from purchasing any land in the State. Though the law was amended in Bakshi's days its basic principle still holds good. From time to time heinous suggestions are made in irresponsible quarters that the Hindu refugees from Pakistan should be settled in Kashmir to diminish the ratio of Muslim population. So far such ideas have been deprecated in responsible quarters. But Kashmiris link these suggestions with the demand for abolition of autonomy and draw their own inferences. They are distressed to think that their very existence may be in jeopardy. It is difficult to convince them that this apprehension is wholly unjustified.

It may be unpalatable but it is an undeniable fact that today Kashmir Muslim is mentally and spiritually farther re-

moved from India than he was in 1947-50 when the Constitution makers made provision in the Constitution affording him an opportunity to gain experience by living with India and know for himself the quality of Indian democracy.

Considering these facts it is clear that the application of the Articles 356 and 357 of the Indian Constitution to Kashmir has been untimely, imprudent and inadvisable. It has perpetuated the belief in Kashmir that secular forces are quite weak in India, that Sadiq Government has proved spineless and agreed to comply with the unreasonable desires of Indian Nationalism and that India distrusts the State Muslims. The step has undone much of the good work that Sadiq Government had done especially in the realm of ideas by inducing the Muslims to rethink about the accession dispute ; it has dashed to the ground the new rising hopes of Kashmir democrats and progressives. Worst of all, it has reinforced the waning influence of the extremist and pro-Pakistan sections among the Muslims in the Valley. Sri Jaya Prakash Narayan was rendering a real service in warning India against any attempt at constitutional integration of Kashmir. He pertinently pointed out that "there had been no creditable proof yet that the people of the Valley had freely accepted the legal fact of accession, and in the absence of emotional integration a constitutional step had little meaning." J. P. Narayan rightly stressed that these steps regarding Kashmir would harm India's cause of secularism, democracy, justice and peace. It was no angry remark when he observed that it would also symbolize the "enthronement of aggressive Hindu communalism and that communalism is bound in end to turn upon the Hindu community itself and destroy it." J. P. only got invectives and abuses in return. Nevertheless his words depict the real situation in Kashmir and touch the core of the problem.

A Second Blunder

At the request of the Kashmir leaders, the Durgapur Session of the Indian National Congress amended on 10th January the Party constitution to provide for extension of the Congress activities to Jammu and Kashmir. It was decided that in future a branch of the Congress would function in place of the National Conference. Both G. M. Sadiq and Mir Qasim, besides a number of Kashmir leaders, were present at Durgapur at the time to welcome the decision. In view of the claim that after the liberalization of the administration and ousting of the Bakshi group from the Government the National Conference had been reviving and becoming increasingly popular among the Kashmiris the reasons which led to this move were obscure. But coming soon after the constitutional

changes the move harmed rather than helped the ruling party. If the Kashmiris believe that the National Conference leaders had lost the game and were as a last resort trying to exploit the name of the Congress to regain public confidence they were not to blame. For, even the pro-Congress *Hindustan Times* commented: "To refurbish its image in the eyes of the people of Kashmir, after all the damage has been done to it (ruling party) during the years of the Bakshi regime, will not be so easy. Yet the party will stand or fall by that test. No amount of blood transfusion from the Congress will help it to regain the popular support it commanded during the struggle for freedom and in the first years of power unless the party develops demonstrably high standards of integrity, public service, and fair play."¹

Like the constitutional changes the dissolution of National Conference was a blunder; it is bound to defeat the purpose for which it has been professedly made. National Conference enjoyed glorious local traditions, a name and a past which evoked sentiments of patriotism, sacrifice and self-respect in the Kashmiris which Congress will never be able to do. For over thirty-two years the State people had reared this organisation with hard toil and life blood. For Kashmir Muslims it had a special attraction. It was a symbol of their political achievements, cultural advance and national existence. There is no distinguished Kashmiri leader to whatever political ideology he subscribes today, who did not at one time or another belong to it. Even those who parted company with the Conference for one reason or another retained affection for it. It was therefore improper for Sadiq and his colleagues to become grave-diggers, bury the Conference and write its epitaph. Instead of bringing Kashmiris nearer to India this unwarranted act will only help to strengthen hostility and bitterness thus making integration of the State with India all the more difficult. It is a pity that neither the Indian politicians nor the Kashmir leaders could see this inevitable development.

But the Indian leaders are impatient to accelerate the integration come what may and seem to be prepared to encounter all the difficulties that it may bring.

Attempts to Rehabilitate Bakshi

While application of Articles 356 and 357 to Kashmir and replacement of National Conference by Congress were in process, a significant development was taking place simultaneously. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed who had been arrested on 22nd September on charges of corruption and other offences of

1. *Hindustan Times* dated January 21, 1965.

criminal nature was suddenly released on 13th December on grounds of health. During the trying days of Relic Upheaval the Indian Press was full of stories revealing how Bakshi and his henchmen had through corruption, bullying and strong arm methods butchered democracy, antagonised the State people and created revulsion against India in the hearts of the Kashmir Muslims. Therefore when the Sadiq Government announced that they intended to institute a Commission of Inquiry against the former premier, it was welcomed in the State and outside. But as we saw the Sadiq Government did not come up to the expectations of the reactionaries and the Hindu communalists because the liberalization policy allowed the Kashmir Muslims complete freedom of expression. What the reactionaries wanted was greater suppression of Kashmir Muslims than Bakshi was capable of administering. This Sadiq Government refused to do. So when during Bakshi's days of imprisonment his band of followers went about denouncing Sadiq's liberalism and telling the Indians that harsh rule alone could save Kashmir for India they were heard with sympathy and given words of encouragement. Perhaps the leaders of the Indian Government too did not remain unaffected by this anti-liberal propaganda.

After release, Bakshi came to Delhi ostensibly for treatment. Here he was showered with meaningful affection, regard and honour which was heartening to the supporters of the ousted regime. Among those who called at Bakshi's residence were Vice-President Dr. Zakir Hussain, Premier Lal Bahadur Shastri, Health-Minister Dr. Sushila Nayar and a host of other ministers and ex-ministers and deputy ministers visited him. President Dr. Radhakrishnan made a telephonic enquiry about the health of the former Kashmir Premier at his house. And Kamraj Nadar, the overcautious Congress President, too made a call. What happened in the meetings is not known. But the National Conference leaders were much annoyed and upset at this welling-up of sympathy for Bakshi. Sadiq commented at a press interview : "I can only say that such an attitude (of the senior members of Government of India) does cause considerable confusion to the people of our State".

On the one hand allowing and assisting the Kashmir Government to set up a high commission to probe into charges of corruption and other criminal misdeeds against Bakshi, and on the other to display such extra-ordinary regard for the accused may seem madness but it is a madness with a method. The Government of India are rehabilitating the fallen politician-administrator with a purpose : They seem to think that if the liberal Government fails to fully integrate the State with India

the ruthless and unscrupulous Bakshi may still be needed to handle the situation.

India Loses More Ground

Whatever the Congress leaders may think these recent events have not benefited India or advanced the cause of integration in any way ; they have surely given a setback to the liberalization of administration and made the task of Sadiq Government immensely hard. If these have helped any one it is the force which is working against India and is opposed to the Sadiq Government.

There are several groups and organisations in Kashmir which do not support the present accession of the State to India and persistently demand the right of self-determination for the people. Some of these are not pro-Pakistan and one or two would even like the accession to become permanent but only with the will of the State people.

Among the opposition parties two are quite strong. One of the two is Political Conference led by Ghulam Mohiuddin Qara, an old, quiet worker and a secularist at heart. He thinks that the chances of Kashmir remaining with India are gone mainly through the stupid policy and ambivalent behaviour of the Indian leaders. He is a staunch supporter of Kashmir Nationalism and cannot conceive of the State joining Pakistan where the opportunities for the Kashmiris to shape their own future are smaller than by remaining with India. He would therefore prefer to see Kashmir achieving an independent status. Though known as a pro-Pakistan leader, Qara does not in fact see eye to eye with Pakistan on matters of fundamental nature. His speeches produced a moderating influence on the Relic Restoration Movement and kept the excited mobs under control. In one of the mass meetings at Zadibal he did not hesitate to advise the Kashmiris that while denouncing Hindu communalism they should not forget or overlook the atrocities of Muslim fanatics in East Pakistan. For saying so he incurred the displeasure of the extremist sections among Kashmiris but he saw no reason to repent. He has many differences with Sheikh Abdullah but considers it inexpedient to quarrel with him. He has been keenly watching the reactions of the liberalisation policy in the country and has at times appreciated the courageous measures adopted by the Sadiq Government. But I think the recent events and much more what might follow will throw him willy nilly into the lap of Pakistan. He made a vigorous speech at Hazratbal criticising the Indian Government for effecting the constitutional changes and for disregarding the wishes of the State people.

Abdullah A Force to be Reckoned with

The strongest opposition force, however, is the Plebiscite Front led de facto if not de jure by Sheikh Abdullah. I must at once admit that it has a large following among the Kashmir Muslims though despite its non-communal name it commands no support of the State Hindus or Sikhs.

Just as at one time Sheikh Abdullah was the National Conference today he is the Plebiscite Front because he functions as the mouthpiece of the national frustration and the public resentment which this organisation mostly represents.

Sheikh Abdullah started his political career in 1931 as champion of the Muslim cause when the struggle for freedom in Kashmir entered a revolutionary phase. He was one of the few educated young men who fathered, directed and led the movement in the hectic period when the Muslim masses joined it for the first time. For more than seven years his approach to State politics was communal making religion the main plank of his agitation against the Hindu autocratic rule. Then profiting by the experience he gained by coming in close contact with the poorest sections of his community, fed up with the communal bickerings in the Valley and associating with better informed men and patriots among the non-Muslims, he took a very bold step to secularise the State politics. He contrived to convert the Muslim Conference, the organisation that had been founded to achieve freedom from autocratic rule, into the National Conference; its doors were flung open for non-Muslims who had faith in secularism and wanted to establish a social democracy in the State. Sheikh Abdullah had thus assumed a great responsibility which called forth the rarest of qualities in any State politician.

Sheikh Abdullah rose equal to the occasion and for sometime intelligently led the people steering clear the ship of Kashmir politics of shoals and rocks. But the Sheikh never tried to enrich his mind with new ideas; he did not care to study political science or history, not even the history of his own people whom he wanted to liberate. He could not therefore fully and properly grasp the implications of the revolutionary move he had made in changing the Muslim Conference into the National Conference. At times of crisis which occurred every now and then, he felt puzzled, confounded and confused not knowing how to proceed further. Often he would jump from one extreme to the other bewildering his own followers and the people at large.

In 1947, when the subcontinent was partitioned on religious basis the National Conference under Sheikh Abdullah's

leadership decided that the State should accede to India. Lust for power more than devotion to an ideal guided him to take this momentous decision. This brought him a good reward ; he was nominated as the Prime Minister by the Maharaja and given power to run the State Government. But since a majority of the Muslims opposed the accession Sheikh Abdullah resorted to repressive measures to maintain himself in power. For six years (1947-1953) he ruled by naked force and at the end of that period despite some excellent work that he had done to raise the standard of life, he found himself thoroughly unpopular with all classes of people. Then he made a somersault saying that the accession to India was unjustified and accused the Congress leaders of denying the Kashmiris their right of self-determination. This brought about his downfall and incarceration for 11 years.

Through atonement in the shape of long imprisonment Sheikh Abdullah regained the affection of the Muslims though it has not helped the State people to come out of the mess into which he put them.

Sheikh Abdullah appears to have some awareness of this. From his speeches and actions it is clear that he is weighed down by a sense of sin. He cannot forget that though he had started as a crusader for the Muslim in cause 1931 it was he who forced the State to join India, mercilessly suppressed the Muslims, invited non-Muslim armies to assist him in this atrocious task, promulgated ordinances to persecute patriotic elements and in other hundred ways trod over the bodies of his coreligionists. He ardently desires to expiate for the sinful period of his life. For this reason he repeatedly insists on the right of self-determination for the Kashmiris which he believes is the most cherished demand of the Muslims. This, however, is the sole stock-in-trade of his politics. For the rest, he tries to forget himself in religious rituals and observances.

Failure and persecution stiffen minds of moral men to firmly hold on to their convictions. It has been different with Sheikh Abdullah. Deprivation of power and long incarceration wrought a change in his political beliefs ; he no longer talks about modernism or man's ability to shape his own destiny. He has lost faith in himself and the people. Therefore, he has reverted to the earlier phase of his life, adopted medieval religious outlook and is seeking peace in complete dependence on an unknown, unseen, transcendental power.

Sheikh Abdullah renewed the practice given up for many years, of inaugurating public gatherings with recitation of verses

from the holy Quran. Often he abruptly suspends the proceedings of a political meeting in the middle instructing the audience to offer nimaz. Though he has castigated mullahs as obscurantists and enemies of progress, he has virtually emerged as the third mirwaiz of the Kashmir Muslims with Durgah Hazratbal as his pulpit from where weekly sermons are delivered to large congregations. In the role of a religious preacher Sheikh Abdullah finds himself in his true element like fish in water. And that is perhaps the best role for which he is eminently fitted.

Early in February Sheikh Abdullah accompanied by his wife and Mirza Afzal Beg, proceeded on an odyssey which includes pilgrimage to Mecca and long travels in the Middle East and Western Europe. Stating the purpose of the Haj pilgrimage Beg said, according to a broadcast from Azad Kashmir Radio : "We are going to seek forgiveness for our past sins from Allah and the holy Prophet". The Hindu communalists opposed Sheikh Abdullah's travels in foreign lands but Government of India took the sound decision by granting him a passport to visit any country he desired and express any views he had on the Kashmir issue.

It is disappointing that Sheikh Abdullah's close collaboration for over a decade with Congress and its leaders failed to inspire him to take up any constructive work in other fields of social activity. Beyond building a few mosques or renovating old shrines his record in this respect is quite blank. He is temperamentally disinclined to devote his time or energy for spread of liberal education or human culture.

Sheikh Abdullah it seems has exhausted the progressive tendencies which appeared prominent in him at one time and which emboldened him to secularise State politics in the thirties. The bitter experience mostly born of his own blunders and inadequate understanding of political philosophy, has narrowed his mind and circumscribed his vision. Nevertheless, he is at present heading the genuine opposition to the State Government and to the forces which stand for India in Kashmir. Though the Kashmiris have not forgotten the stained record of Sheikh Abdullah's deeds or misdeeds when he was in power, the Muslims on the whole are prepared to forgive him and once again hold him in high esteem if he leads them according to their desires. He is therefore a power to be reckoned with. There have been reports that his influence is waning. Premier Sadiq stated publicly that "the Sheikh has lost a lot of ground precisely because he has no answer to the questions which the people ask." Liberalisation has no doubt made Sheikh's exhortations less appealing. His barren efforts to bring

about Indo-Pakistan concord and his intolerant behaviour has thinned the ranks of his admirers. But it is dangerous to overestimate these facts particularly when the liberalisation itself has received a setback and people have again begun to wonder whether Indian leaders are sincere in enlisting the goodwill of the Kashmiris or are bent upon forcing them to remain with India against their desire.

Considering his long political career and the zigzag manner it has followed it is difficult to say what path Sheikh Abdullah will ultimately pursue. Beyond demanding the right of self-determination for the State people, he has not clarified his views on the accession dispute. To him this right can mean anything. His lieutenant Mohammed Afzal Beg said recently at Aligarh that if they precisely say what they want it will complicate the issue. It is generally believed that the Plebiscite Front stands for an independent Kashmir but there are reasons to believe that the party is not averse to the Valley joining Pakistan ; the leaders of that neighbouring country are at pains to enlist the support of the party.

Sheikh Abdullah is over sixty years old. Thirty-four years of his hard labour have produced little fruit ; he feels tired and seems to think that he does not have the capacity to properly handle the frankenstein of his own creation. He has renovated a mosque near his big house where he often retires to pray. He has expressed a desire to run away from the rough and tumble of public life and spend the rest of his days praying to God for forgiveness in the precincts of this mosque. That will at least fulfil his great ambition to live a hero in the memory of the generations to come of religious-minded Muslims.

But Sheikh Abdullah is an unpredictable politician. It should not be a surprise if egged on by the extremists among his followers he takes up a threatening position and involves the State in grave trouble. At the same time, I do not rule out the possibility of his coming to terms with India on the condition that power is handed over to his party. In 1958, when he was released for a few months his first public statement given to a Bombay journalist was a complaint that Mr. Nehru did not take him into confidence while adopting measures to integrate Kashmir with India as he did with his successor after his arrest.

But, whether Sheikh Abdullah continues to remain in politics or retires, whether he can see some kindly light or again play a fool as he did in the past, so long as there is deep resentment in the hearts of the Muslims caused by genuine apprehensions that they have as citizens of the Indian Union, there can be no

peace or tranquillity in Kashmir. This resentment will give birth to new extremist leaders if old ones fail to lead them. It should not be forgotten that a lad, Mirwaiz Farooq, effectively challenged Abdullah when the latter publicly stated that accession dispute was not the major problem that faced the Kashmiris.

There is a belief that if some settlement could be arrived at with Abdullah things would be all right. This is an utterly mistaken idea. Sheikh Abdullah or any other leader, however big, is not the real problem in Kashmir. The trouble stems from the sulkiness, anger, and disaffection of the people and that itself is caused by the fears and suspicions above referred to. If India can do something to allay them the problem can be ended and there will be no more extremist leaders to misguide the Kashmiris. The opposition will be disarmed and relegated to its proper place. Unfortunately what India has done and continues to do is to adopt measures augmenting that resentment and when the atmosphere is generated which gives birth to the firebrands the Indian public opinion is excited, perturbed and incensed at the sayings and doings of these leaders.

Liberalisation Opened a Hopeful Chapter

Indian leaders have been expecting an impossible development to take place in Kashmir. They want to see a Muslim leader at the helm of affairs in the State who would be pliable and function according to the wishes of Indian Nationalism disregarding the sentiments and aspirations of the Kashmiris ; at the same time the Indians vainly hope that the Kashmir leader should remain popular with his own people. Attempts made in the past to have a leader with this extraordinary qualification have failed. If Abdullah and Bakshi did not succeed in their endeavour to convert public opinion in Kashmir one of the reasons should be sought in this unreasonable desire of the Indian leadership. In Kashmir only that leader has a chance to survive opposition attacks and lead the State people to the goal of democracy as a part of the Indian Nation who will during the transition period wisely strike a balance between the aspirations and emotions of the Indians and the urges and sentiments of the Kashmiris. It is futile to believe that the aims, inclinations, passions and desires of the two peoples are identical in every respect today.

After a long period of seventeen years a new chapter opened with the rise to power of the liberal group in the National Conference. Sadiq and his colleagues had to work under many handicaps : they had themselves been a part of the machinery of persecution and corruption since 1947 and there-

fore not above criticism ; the legislature was totally unrepresentative and the party apparatus lying in pieces ; the personnel of the administration had been widely if not wholly corrupted. It was a depressing job to assume office and run the Government conscientiously. But Sadiq had the sagacity to follow the policy which would lead to the integration of the State with India as envisaged by the Constitution makers. And he did his best.

Liberalisation got a start, the sharp edge of the opposition's ferocity was blunted, things began to wear a happy appearance. Undeniably the policy of liberalisation afforded opponents of India the opportunity to express their views freely. But there was no need to get nervous over it ; for in the long run relaxation was bound to advance the cause of integration : ventilated grievances do not cause much harm but if they remain sunken in the hearts they become dangerous. Such arguments, however, cut little ice with the reactionaries ; they raised hue and cry charging the Sadiq Government for having given a long rope to anti-Indian and pro-Pakistan elements. Vigorous propaganda was set afoot that Kashmir had reached the brink of a precipice and that it can be saved only by abrogation of Article 370 and imposition of the President's rule.

Remedy Worse than Disease

The advocates of this anti-democratic policy do not seem to have given a moment's thought to the consequences that are bound to follow if their will be done. The President's rule cannot be a permanent arrangement to run any State ; it can be resorted to only in case of grave emergency to restore normal working of the Constitution. In other States of India where no party or class of people think of secession it is quite helpful as a stop gap measure. But in Kashmir it can aggravate the disease in body politic. If President's rule is imposed merely because the Muslims are opposed to accession and are at heart hostile to India, this is no remedy. Constitutionally the President can rule only for six months in the first instance and may extend the period to the maximum of three years after which he shall have to hold general elections in the State. President's rule is not going to mollify the Kashmiris or persuade them to change their views. In the general elections after three years of Presidential rule there will not be a ghost of a chance for any pro-Indian candidate to be elected, at any rate among the Muslims. With the majority of the seats captured by the anti-Indian groups India will have a crisis of first magnitude at hand. The propaganda of the Hindu reactionaries and communalists is inevitably leading the country to that end.

In my extensive talks with the National Conference leaders at different places in the Kashmir Valley I found they were as opposed to the holding of a plebiscite as any Indian politician. Amazingly, they, at times, talked in the language of Jan Sangh leaders ; with vehemence and dogmatism they advanced the hackneyed arguments which have lost much of their force and relevance. When I pointed out that a free general election was an inalienable part of the liberal policy pursued by the Sadiq Government and if the ruling party expected to win them there was no reason why they should feel nervous about the plebiscite, no one could give me a satisfactory reply. Indeed some of them bluntly admitted that the elections shall have to be rigged, in 1967. I however made it clear that liberalisation would be meaningless if it did not lead to free elections. Now it seems to me that after recent developments when the Muslims stand farther away from India the chances of a free election are remoter.

Can Sadiq Deliver Good ?

Of all the National Conference leaders I believe G. M. Sadiq is competent to keep Kashmir with India with the will of the Kashmir people. If he fails in this endeavour it will be a disaster. Sadiq is a secularist by conviction as well as by temperament. Throughout his public career he has consistently followed a progressive path and tried to guide the premier political party on democratic lines. He is known to be incorruptible and has kept his hands clean while others were wallowing in the mire of graft and speculation. If he had his way and the enlightened support of Congress leaders and Indian public opinion, he might have in course of time delivered the goods and fully integrated Kashmir with India as envisaged by the Constitution makers. But recent developments have made this doubtful. It is a pity that India has impaired the potentialities of his liberal policies by taking steps which have given rise to new fears and suspicions in the minds of the Kashmir Muslims. Though both Sadiq and Mir Qassim have publicly expressed jubilation at the constitutional changes, the dissolution of National Conference and establishment of Congress unit in the State, I do not think they are really happy over it ; they have the misgivings about the future.

Having retreated some steps under pressure, the liberal Government has taken a fresh stand to resist further inroads into the autonomy of the State. Inspired reports appeared in the Press that the ruling party intends to withdraw the State flag, scrap the State Constitution, replace Ranbir Penal Code by Indian Penal Code and abolish other vestiges of the partly-

destroyed individuality of the Kashmiris. The liberals have sharply reacted to this mendacious propaganda and a spokesman of the Kashmir Government firmly contradicted these reports as entirely unfounded. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed's admirers exerted their by-no-means insignificant influence in New Delhi to get the proposal for instituting an inquiry into the grave charges against their fallen hero, dropped. The Indian Government was inclined to agree. A tussle ensued for weeks behind the closed doors but Sadiq put his foot down and declined to yield. In these instances one can see the smouldering embers hidden in the ashes of the national spirit of the liberal leaders. One would wish that the Indian Government desisted from extinguishing them. "We face a grim situation today", observed Sadiq giving his impressions of the latest developments to a Bombay journalist.¹ "It is not the enemies of our frontiers who worry us so much. We have to wipe out the legacy of 17 years of misrule, corruption, repression and political hooliganism." Laying down his finger at the right spot which pinched him, he concluded: "In this task, we need sympathy, support, patience and understanding from the rest of the country."

Force of circumstances and desire to gain public support are impelling Sadiq Government to make one compromise after another with its cherished principles and declared policies. A number of opportunist legislators and corrupt officials have already made their way into the affections of the cabinet ministers. In the matter of appointment to public services the practice of jobbery has restarted though yet on an insignificant scale. Some persons have been arrested and held in detention under D.I.R. for raising slogans and participating in demonstrations. These are small but ominous portents that should distress democrats for the danger is not very remote that the Government may indiscernibly and unwittingly go on the same path which was followed by its predecessors with the well-known consequences.

Can India Deny Democracy to Kashmir ?

There are people who believe that if the issue of accession is unilaterally shelved by the Indian Government once and for all, the Kashmiris will consider it a *fait accompli* and cease to think about it; the State people will then try to reconcile themselves to the irrevocable decision and the problem will be over. As one prominent National Conference leader told me at Srinagar, keeping open the accession issue creates an un-

1. *Blitz, Bombay, 1965 Republic Day Special.*

settling effect ; the sooner it is closed the better. It is on the basis of such logic that the Jan Sangh and other communal sections in India have been stridently demanding the abrogation of Article 370. But this view does not take into account several factors that contribute to the situation which is faced in Kashmir.

India is a democratic republic and is earnestly labouring to build a socialist pattern of society through democratic methods. She cannot deny for ever the democratic right to one of its constituent states and still claim to pursue its appointed course. In a democracy the right of self-determination is a perpetual right of the people ; otherwise the holding of free general elections would be meaningless. India may reject the plebiscite and turn down U. N. resolutions as impractical as contended by the Indian representative at the august body ; but India cannot deny the democratic practice of free general elections in the Kashmir State for ever. If Sadiq Government remains true to its convictions it has to hold free elections in 1967, not the elections of the type held in 1950, 1957 and 1962 but genuinely free elections in the right meaning of that word. Liberal policy has to be carried to its logical end. Judging from the present position Sadiq Government cannot win elections. For surely if the ruling party is afraid of plebiscite because they think the people will vote against India what guarantee is there that the State legislature will not be captured by the antagonists. It will not be easy then to dissolve the legislature and hand over the State to President's rule.

That is not all. India may like to believe that the accession is no more a problem because it is irrevocable and final ; plebiscite may be declared as impracticable solution and the U. N. resolutions outdated. But the Kashmiris do not view the matter from that angle. To them accession issue is alive and they are intent upon exercising the right of self-determination and though the U. N. resolutions are not sacrosanct some way has to be discovered to let the State people have the opportunity to decide the future affiliations of the State. India can shut the mouth of the Kashmiris but she cannot silence the protests of world public, especially the Pakistanis.

In the U. N. Security Council India has in the past often depended upon the support of U. S. S. R. at the time of need when an unfavourable decision was about to be taken regarding the Kashmir dispute. After the exit of Nikita Khrushchev from Kremlin and the recent developments in the Russian politics it becomes imperative that no risk is taken by continu-

ing the conditions in Jammu and Kashmir that make this dependence necessary.

As long as the Kashmiris are discontented Pakistan propaganda will be effective and the world audience will lend ear to it. Only recently some delegates to the non-official Commonwealth Relations Conference which was held in New Delhi emphasised the need of an early solution of the Kashmir dispute and suggested that it be settled by holding a plebiscite in accordance with the U. N. resolutions. A proposal was also made for the establishment of a Commonwealth Arbitration Council under the chairmanship of the U. K. to arbitrate in this matter.

Above all, to say that in their helplessness Kashmiris will accept the *fait accompli* after India makes the declaration that accession issue has been shelved is an immoral proposal not befitting the country of Buddha and Gandhi; the very idea is revolting.

Kashmir and Nagaland

India is predominantly Hindu but it has two regions—Kashmir and Nagaland—where the majority of population is non-Hindu, Muslim in the former and Christian in the latter. For reasons that may not be discussed here the minority communities in India have yet to imbibe that spirit of Indian Nationalism which comes through confidence in the fair play of the majority, a sense of perfect security and hope of a bright future. Dissatisfaction among the minorities has made Kashmir and Nagaland averse to becoming part of the Indian republic. If closely examined the problems of Kashmir and Nagaland with which India is confronted present similar difficulties in several respects.

The Naga people like the Kashmiris demanded fullest autonomy as an important condition for their homeland to form a part of India. This was denied to them persistently and they were compelled to raise the banner of revolt with the slogan that Nagas are not Indians and want complete freedom from Indian domination. Indian leaders viewed the recalcitrance of the tiny community with contempt and angrily sent armies to quell the disturbances. For years a battle of attrition was fought in the Naga areas but with diminishing hope of any success. Next, the Indian leaders embarked on a dual policy of reforms and conquest: the administration was liberalised, economy was improved by generous subsidies to expand cottage industries, education was spread and an elected body was created to advise the Assam Governor for ruling the disturbed areas. When this too failed in achieving

the purpose a new State of Nagaland was brought into existence with its own elected legislature and a responsible Government. But the results were no better. The rebellious Nagas who had by now become intensely resentful declared that they would accept nothing less than complete freedom outside India. At this stage the slumbering India realized the gravity of the situation and the need to deal generously with a non-Hindu majority area. Negotiations were started through the offices of a Peace Mission sponsored by the Baptist Church. Hostilities were temporarily suspended and a search for permanent settlement started.

At the time of writing a plan prepared by the Peace Mission is under consideration. How anxious the Indian Government is to come to terms and at what price may be ascertained from what the Foreign Minister told his cabinet colleagues when they wanted to know how far the Government was prepared to go to satisfy the underground Nagas. They were assured that a settlement must be found within the Constitution. "Subject to this, Nagaland might be given the widest measure of autonomy." Prime Minister Shastri has publicly said the same thing repeatedly. It is significant that India is now ready with the offer of full autonomy and it is the Naga leaders who are hesitant to accept it.

Like Nagaland, Kashmir also has peculiar problems because the population of the State is predominantly Muslim whose sentiments, emotions and inclinations in certain respects are different from the rest of Indians. Fortunately the Constitution makers fully grasped the working of this frame of mind and wisely allowed substantial autonomy to the State providing that if and when the Kashmiris felt convinced that their future was secure within India they could ask for the abrogation of the provision and get their State absorbed in India as its integral part. It is a pity that this healthy and wholesome process was not allowed to develop for 17 years and with every change things went from bad to worse.

By eroding the Article 370 of the Constitution and by attempting to merge Kashmir with India without the will of the Kashmiris, Indian Government is making the Valley a fertile ground for the enemies of India on which they can thrive. It is amazing that the experienced and intelligent Congress leaders should fail to learn a lesson from Nagaland. Perhaps there is no possibility of the Kashmiris resorting to violence however sullen, disaffected and disgruntled they may be. But it is certain that they will harbour intense feelings of hostility towards India and those who are in power in the State. This will hardly allow things to come to normal in the

country. Restlessness, abnormality and disturbed life will continue to be the fate of the Kashmiris. It will mean frequent frictions, clashes, brawls, skirmishes, uprisings and consequent deploying of huge armies all over the State. The accumulated anger is bound to produce upheavals, like the one we witnessed in the winter 1963-64.

The Way Out

Is there then no way out? I think that despite what has taken place the hope is not entirely lost; but it will need himalayan moral courage to pause, review the policy so far pursued, and adopt sensible measures to meet the situation in the light of experience gained both in Kashmir and Nagaland. The idea of retaining Kashmir by might should be abandoned once and for all. Poet-Historian Kalhana wrote in 1149: "Such is Kashmir the country which may be conquered by the force of moral excellence but not by armed force." These words are as true today as they were when written eight centuries ago.¹

Kashmir cannot be treated like any other State in India for the very sound reason that it is a majority Muslim area. By having agreed to its accession the Congress leaders have renewed their war against communalism and the two-nation theory which they had lost by accepting the partition of India on religious basis. Today there is no foreign power to thwart the efforts of Congressmen by misguiding the Muslims. If the Muslims remain sullen or dissatisfied the responsibility will be laid at the door of the Indian Government. Kashmir Muslims have to be convinced that by becoming permanent citizens of India their religion and culture will flourish and they will attain the political and economic freedom for which they have fought and sacrificed for decades. If India fails in this task it will not be able to retain Kashmir permanently however long it may hold on to the State by other means.

It is idle to oppose the two-nation theory when all along and all the time earnest efforts are made to appease Hindu communalism. In the war of ideals fought on the soil of Kashmir India cannot hope to conquer so long as Hindu communalism is not effectively curbed in India. By constantly keeping in mind the reaction of Kashmir Muslims to the events in India the Congress leaders will be able to strengthen secularism and improve Indian Democracy. Unfortunately the present policy of the Indian Government in this behalf is characterised by indecision, ambivalence lack of direction and purpose. If India is beaten a second time in the war of ideo-

1. *Rajtarangini*, Taranga I, 392.

logies, as it may in Kashmir, it will end in a national disaster engulfing Hindu communalists no less than the secularists.

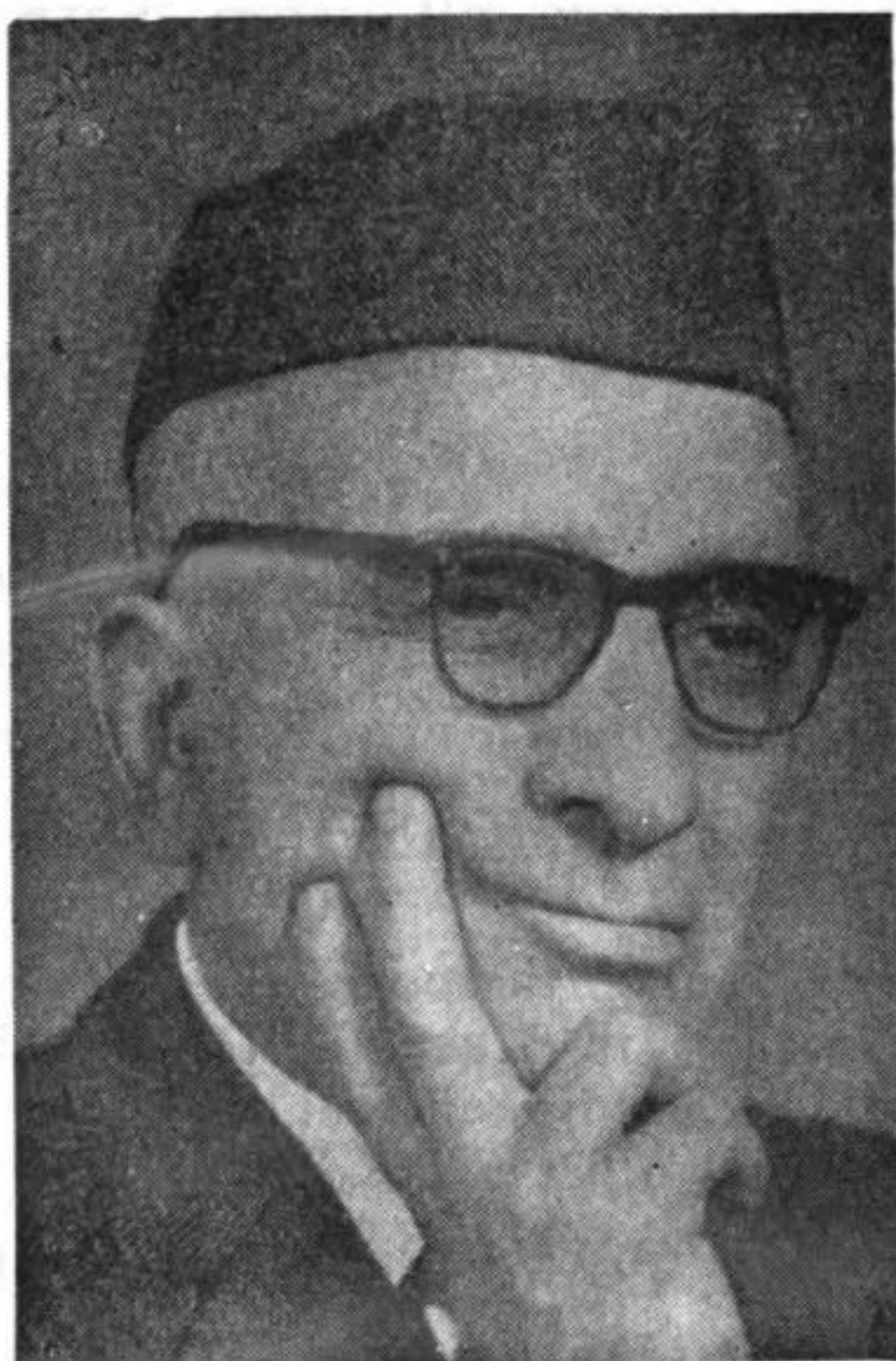
In spite of the sweeping generalisations commonly indulged in by superficial observers, there are many shades of political opinion in Jammu and Kashmir which may be categorised under three heads. First, there are those who desire that the State should be held by India through the support of the people if conveniently possible without it if necessary. This is the general Hindu view with which many National Conference members agree. Today the Government of India too virtually subscribes to this view. The second approach diametrically opposed to this is that because Kashmir is predominantly Muslim it belongs to Pakistan for the identical reasons which made the division of the subcontinent imperative. Those who advocate holding of plebiscite here and now belong to this category. Both of these viewpoints are adequately expressed and well known inside and outside the State. But there are groups which adhere to the approach originally thought out by the Constitutional makers to solve the problem ; their's is the liberal, democratic approach. According to them Kashmir should remain secular and maintain the traditions the people have inherited from forbears through generations. The democrats believe that any change in the present affiliations will not be conducive to the growth of democratic institutions and might destroy the individuality of the Kashmiris. Renouncement of secularism will mean repudiation of our heritage and cultural past ; it will put the future of social democracy in jeopardy. But since Indian democracy in practice, if not in theory, is heavily coloured with religious prejudice, the Kashmiris should have the opportunity to retain their autonomy as provided at the time of framing the Indian Constitution, at any rate for a transition period. The duration of the transition will depend on the good work done by the Indian and Kashmir leaders in their respective spheres of influence. It can be minimised to ten years or it may be prolonged to a century but in no case should the autonomy be ended without the free and unequivocal recommendation of the Kashmiris to this effect, found such democratic elements in every political party functioning in the Valley, though they mostly prefer to remain unaligned.

By encouraging the democratic view and by supporting the self-respecting patriots who represent the urges and aspirations of the Kashmiris, the Indian Government can create conditions in the Valley which will gradually bring about the emotional integration of the State with the rest of the Union ; all other methods are bound to end in failure.

During the past seventeen years Kashmir leaders have made no attempt to educate public opinion in the State regarding the fundamental principles of secular democracy ; not even the front rank workers of the ruling party possess a sound knowledge of different political theories. Very little is known about the social, political and economic developments across the cease-fire line and the conditions prevailing there at present. Outright denunciation of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir may please the Indian propagandists and the Hindus but it carries little conviction with the Kashmir Muslims. Indeed the effect it produces is contrary to what the ruling party aims at. An unbiased appraisal of the developments in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir can be helpful in strengthening the secular outlook, not stupid propaganda.

If the warfare has to be conducted on an ideological plane as surely it should be, a movement has to be launched with the aim of bringing about a cultural renaissance by fighting obscurantism, prejudice, fatalism and superstition. The outlook on life has to be revolutionised by fostering humanist approach and democratic way of living among the State people, faith has to be instilled in the innate rationality of man ; awareness has to be created in higher values of life such as search for truth, regard for human dignity, love for fellow human beings and craving for social justice. Men with nerve and rational outlook alone can be dependable and not yesman which the Indian Government has been at pains to create and discard subsequently. It is no doubt advisable to promptly redress grievances and allay fears in political, social and economic spheres ; but it should be remembered that the deadly foe of secularism sits in the minds of men and it is there that he has to be fought and vanquished.

So long as Article 370 is not actually abrogated a plan can be devised under which Kashmir will enjoy autonomy within the framework of the Indian Constitution. Today this is a possible alternative to repression ; tomorrow it may be too late.



Prem Nath Bazaz graduated from the Punjab University in 1927 and entered public life as supervisor of W.W. Trust Girls School in Srinagar. In 1931 he worked as a member of the Kashmir State Grievances Enquiry Commission and the Constitutional Reforms Conference. He started daily *Vitasta* in 1932 to advocate cause of secularism, democracy and freedom. With the same purpose he founded weekly *Hamdard* in cooperation with Sheikh Abdullah in 1935.

For taking active part in Kashmir's Struggle for Freedom, Bazaz was imprisoned in 1938 for six months, in 1947 for three years and in 1955 for one year. He was externed from Kashmir State in 1950. In Delhi he started a monthly *Voice of Kashmir* which suspended publication after his detention.

Bazaz is the author of several books and has written many pamphlets and monograms on economic, political and social problems of Kashmir. He contributes articles on Indian and international issues to journals here and abroad.

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